

MINUTES
Advisory Board to
Memphis Animal Services

AUGUST 11, 2009

Present were:

Board Members:

Earnest Alexander
Michelle Buckalew
Allen Iskiwitz
Cindy Sanders
Carol Katz
Janice Taylor Vaughn
Frank James
Keenon McCloy, Interim Division Director

Visitors:

Jan Courtney
Carol Word
Amy Kalkbrenner
Jeanne Chancellor
Jim Donahue
Ed Yancey, Legal Intern

Michelle called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

Ernie announced that Tara Walsh has resigned due to job commitments. Cindy Sanders was sworn in by City Council this month, but a vacancy still exists.

Michelle said that the situation re overcrowding at the shelter continues and some smaller, less aggressive dogs are being held without food and or water until they are euthanized due to larger, more aggressive dogs in cages with them. Ernie said that the officers try to match size and temperament to alleviate this problem. The only answer is more cage space. Ernie said that this is the only shelter where he has witnessed this and the situation is not being ignored.

Supervisors and employees were discussed. Frank said that the shelter employees feel that the Advisory Board is overly critical of them. Cindy said that she supports some and not others and when an employee acts inappropriately (such as the court room incident), she will not sugar coat it. Ernie said he stresses training and that all city employees are currently undergoing training at The Learning Academy. Jan Courtney asked whether the employees are evaluated. Ernie said that regular evaluations would begin as soon as training is completed.

Ernie said that they would be testing a new euthanasia schedule for 30 days. Dogs suitable for adoption may be held for more than three days.

Some groups request holding a dog or dogs for longer. Michelle suggested holding the shelter open on Sundays and closing Monday. Ernie has met resistance on this suggestion from the employees. If days or hours of operation are to be changed, the city Administration would be involved in that decision. Michelle said we need to make progress toward being a 21st century shelter and we are not moving in that direction. She felt that the opinion of a few employees should not override the best interest of the shelter. Ernie suggested that the Board handle the Sunday adoption events.

Currently, the shelter has three supervisors: Miss Mary is the office supervisor; Ivan Russell is the Field Supervisor, Tina Quatabon is the Kennel Supervisor. Further, Tracy Dunlap is the Senior Technician and Ralph Mickins is the Senior Animal Control Officer.

Ernie reported that sick and injured animals are going to the Summer Avenue Emergency Clinic when there is not medical staff at the Shelter. That clinic then makes the decision whether to treat or euthanize. The city employee performing euthanasia at the shelter receives a pay differential.

Keenon McCloy was asked about consolidating animal services with the county. The City favors this as it makes financial sense, but the County only wants to contribute, not consolidate.

Carol Word commented that although adoption is important, only spay and neuter will lower the intake. She said that Mid-South Spay & Neuter is the only low cost clinic in West Tennessee. The Memphis community does not adequately support it. Michelle wants to see a community-driven event such as is happening in New York City. She said that grants are available for spay and neuter voucher. Keenon offered any library branch for such events and said that she can provide grant writer to Ernie.

Jim Donahue said that publicity makes all the difference for adoption events. He cited the PetCo adoption, which had been advertised, and all animals were adopted, contrasted with the adoption even at Hollywood Feed that had no publicity and no animals were adopted. Jim was urged to get all of the MAS adoptions advertised in Cindy Wolff's column. Ernie, likewise, said that he would have the shelter post adoption events with Wolff. Channel One is offering pet adoptions that the Humane Society has taken advantage of and MAS should too.

In the past MAS has allowed adoptions before the pet had been spayed or neutered, allowing the owner possession of the pet only after surgery.

Ernie said he had been criticized for allowing this in the past but will do so again with the Board's concurrence. Also, Ernie had instituted a policy of vaccinating all intake animals, but discontinued this practice due to budgetary constraints. After remarks by the Board that every well-run shelter vaccinates upon entry, Keenon said that she would try to find some funding for this purpose. It was agreed that all animals going to adoption events should be vaccinated.

Ernie recommended having a member of the MPD anti-cruelty task force as a representative on this Board.

The disinfectant shortage has been corrected and is not a problem now.

Keenon McCloy reported that Interim Mayor Myron Lowry has been very supportive of the shelter, although the past year has been very challenging financially. He has come to the shelter and is anxious to being construction of the new shelter before bad weather sets in. There is a new openness concerning communication with the media. Ed Yancey is working on by laws for the Board.

The ordinance prohibiting roadside sales of animals was handed out. Unfortunately, violation is limited to a \$50 fine. However, Cindy reported that there is a lobbying effort to increase fines for violation of local ordinances in the Tennessee legislature. Cindy reported that a group of citizens are involved in setting up a 501(c)(3). Jeanne Chancellor said that it should provide for items not in the budget and not basic needs.

Minutes of the July meeting were not accepted; acceptance to be done prior to next meeting by email.

Meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Smith Katz, Secretary

Next Meeting: Monday, September 14, 2009, at 10:00 a.m. at City Hall